

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

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On one of our recent trips back to Fort Defiance for a reunion, my wife asked me, *“How did it feel when your Mom and Dad dropped you off at AMA?”*

I nearly fell over laughing! *“Dropped off?”* I responded, *“It was more like they put me on a plane in Norway and said, ‘See ya next summer, kid.’”*

My Dad was working in the offshore oil industry in Stavanger, Norway, at the time. As I was a fairly bright kid back then, they were concerned about my education while we lived in Norway. So, we got out the *“National Geographic”* magazine, looked in the back and sent off for catalogs to all the military schools listed.

They let me choose which one I wanted to go to for the last two years of high school. The year was 1968. Those who know me or remember me will remember a pudgy little overweight wimp of a bookworm.

So what was my main criteria in selecting a school? I wanted to go to the school that looked the least “physical”, of course, and I guess AMA’s catalog made it seem that way. I remember looking at the catalog for another school and saw kids doing the hand-over-hand thing up a big rope, and I thought, *“No way! Not going to that school.”*

Norway was our family’s first overseas assignment and we were still pretty inexperienced at this international travel thing. I do remember flights being missed or delayed. So, my Mom and Dad sent me back to AMA three days earlier than I was supposed to arrive, just in case.

When I showed up at the front arch one September afternoon, I was not expected. Between **Col. Livick** and **Capt. Dillow**, they got me assigned to my room -- 1st floor, “C” Company under **Capt. Nick, “The Greek”, Syropoulos**.

Unfortunately, I didn’t bring any other clothes with me, because the instructions said uniforms would be provided. And that was still back in the days where people dressed up to travel. So there I was in a black suit and tie with three days to go, looking every bit the super-dork. The football team was there early, so at least I had hot water and meals.

Lucky for me, **Steve Trent** was there. He took me to the Fort and into Staunton and we bought everything I would need. I would have been completely lost without Steve, and while we didn’t become friends, I am still grateful for all he did for me those first few days at AMA. I would not

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have made it without Steve.

I don't remember what I did for those three days, except avoid the football team, and I was sure glad when all the other new cadets started showing up. One benefit of those first three days was that I didn't have to do any of that "first-year rat" stuff, so I could sort of explore the place and get to know my way around.

It wasn't long before I figured out that six or eight pushups was my limit. I think I must have become the source of a lot of entertainment for all the older cadets. When **Doc Savedge** took me aside and told me I could work in the "Recall's" photo lab with **Ron Ginns**, I jumped at the idea – not so much for the fantastic opportunity it would be to learn photography, but more for the great hiding place it would provide!

And boy, for two years, did I hide out!